

Message Text

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ACTION MMO-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 SP-02

PER-01 ABF-01 NSC-05 OMB-01 /038 W

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P 082141Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8903

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 NASSAU 1904

FROM COM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AODE CFED BF XL MX

SUBJ: MODE - PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH RESIDENT IRS OFFICE

AT NASSAU

REF: STATE 279233

1. SUMMARY: THIS RESPONSE TO REFTEL IS BASED UPON
CERTAIN PREMISES:

A. FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT IS THE ACCEPTANCE
OF THE CONCLUSION ADVANCED BY IRS THAT EXTENSIVE TAX REVENUE
IS LOST BY TAX EVASION IN THE CARIBBEAN AREA. THE EMBASSY
HAS SUPPORTED AND CONTINUES TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO OVERCOME
THESE EVASIONARY EFFORTS. HOWEVER, ONE POINT OF CLARIFICA-
TION IS REQUIRED WITH REGARD TO MY POSITION ON THE LOCATION
OF AN IRS OFFICE IN NASSAU TO ACCOMPLISH THE FOREGOING
OBJECTIVE. IT IS NOT ACCURATE TO STATE, AS THE TREASURY DEPT.
LETTER OF SEPT. 1 IMPLIES, THAT I HAVE UNEQUIVOCABLY SUPPORTED
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT IRS POST IN NASSAU. RATHER
I HAVE REPEATEDLY STATED THAT THE EMBASSY STOOD READY TO REVIEW
SYMPATHETICALLY THE MERITS OF SUCH A PROPOSAL SHOULD A
DETAILED JUSTIFICATION BE SUBMITTED. OUR REVIEW OF THE
"STUDY CONCERNING NEED FOR FOREIGN POST IN THE BAHAMAS"
SUBMITTED AS AN ATTACHMENT TO THE AFOREMENTIONED TREASURY
DEPARTMENT LETTER OF SEPT. 1, IS DETAILED BELOW.

B. UNFORTUNATELY THAT STUDY IS SILENT ON ONE OBVIOUS
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ALTERNATIVE TO A NASSAU OFFICE, NAMELY AN O.I.O. OPERATION

CONDUCTED OUT OF MIAMI. IN CERTAIN RESPECTS, AS INDICATED BELOW, IT APPEARS TO US THAT MIAMI HAS ON THE ONE HAND ADVANTAGES OVER NASSAU WHILE ON THE OTHER WOULD OBVIATE CERTAIN POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WHICH AN OFFICE HERE WOULD POSE.

C. IF, CONTRARY TO OUR JUDGEMENT ABOUT THE RELATIVE ADVANTAGE OF MIAMI OVER NASSAU, THE LATTER IS JUDGED TO BE THE SUPERIOR LOCATION, THERE ARE IMPORTANT POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH MUST BE WEIGHED. THESE ARE OF TWO TYPES. FIRST THERE IS THE GENERAL PROBLEM RESULTING FROM THE LEVEL OF HOSTILITY GENERATED BY EARLIER IRS ACTIVITIES UNDER OPERATIONS "HAVEN" AND "TRADEWINDS" WHICH WE ARE NOW SUCCESSFULLY ALBEIT SLOWLY LIVING DOWN. SECOND, THERE IS THE SPECIFIC EXPERIMENT OF HAVING A TDY/IRS OFFICER OPERATING FULL TIME OUT OF THE EMBASSY FOR A THREE MONTH PERIOD. SO FAR THIS EXPERIMENT HAS GONE WELL BUT UNTIL IT IS COMPLETED AND WE CAN PROPOSE TO THE GCOB A LARGER, FULL-TIME IRS OPERATION BASED ON THE CONFIDENCE GENERATED BY THE EFFECTIVE, LOW VISIBILITY SUCCESS OF THAT EXPERIMENT IT WOULD BE OF QUESTIONABLE ADVISABILITY TO PROPOSE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ENLARGED FULL TIME PERMANENT OPERATION.

D. FINALLY, IN THE EVENT A JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF A NASSAU OFFICE AS COMPARED TO MIAMI OFFICE AND FURTHER, GIVEN AGREEMENT ON TIMING FOR ADVANCING SUCH A PROPOSAL TO THE GCOB, THERE ARE SEVERAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS (SPACE, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, ETC.) WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE OVERCOME. THESE LATTER NEED NOT BE INSEPARABLE OBSTACLES BUT WILL GENERATE SUBSTANTIAL COSTS AND WILL TAKE TIME TO WORK OUT.

E. OUR BASIC CONCLUSION IS THAT AN APPROACH ON THIS MATTER TO THE GCOB SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL THE PRECEEDING QUESTIONS ARE SATISFACTORILY SORTED OUT. MOREOVER, I BELIEVE THAT WITH A NEW AMBASSADOR SHORTLY TO ARRIVE ON THE SCENE, A FINAL DECISION SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL HE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE HIS OWN PERSONAL ASSESSMENT. AND AN IMPLICIT ASSUMPTION UNDERLYING OUR ENTIRE ANALYSIS IS THAT WHETHER LOCATED IN NASSAU OR ELSEWHERE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONTROL AND COORDINATION OF ALL IRS ACTIVITIES WHICH TAKE PLACE IN THE BAHAMAS. END SUMMARY

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2. EMBASSY HAS TWO MAJOR QUESTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN IRS REGIONAL OFFICE IN NASSAU. THE FIRST CONCERNS THE CURRENT POLITICAL CONTEXT IN THE BAHAMAS WHICH BEARS ON THE IMPACT WHICH THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN IRS PERMANENT OFFICE AND AS A COROLLARY THERETO THE MATTER OF TIMING OF SUCH A PROPOSAL. THE SECOND RELATES TO THE LONG TERM COST EFFECTIVENESS OF ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE IN NASSAU AS OPPOSED TO HAVING IT OPERATE OUT OF MIAMI.

3. THERE ARE THREE ASPECTS TO THE POLITICAL CONTEXT:

A. DEPARTMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF FALLOUT RESULTING FROM THE PROJECTS "HAVEN" AND "TRADEWINDS" REVELATIONS, CONTINUING PUBLICITY GENERATED BY SAME (E.G., RECENT "SIXTY MINUTES" SEGMENT ON NATIONAL TV), AND EMBASSY'S AND DEPARTMENT'S ATTEMPT (A) TO EXPLAIN TO GCOB OFFICIALS WHAT IN FACT DID TAKE PLACE (AS OPPOSED TO PRESS REPORTS) AND (B) TO REASSURE THEM THAT SUCH EPISODES INVOLVING CLEAR IMPROPRIETIES IF NOT ILLEGAL ACTIONS ARE IN THE PAST AND WILL NOT REOCCUR IN THE FUTURE. ONLY WITH TIME HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO GAIN FOR IRS SOME OF ITS FORMER FREEDOM OF ACTION HERE AND BY MEANS OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT PRESENTED TO GCOB IN SEPT AND THE TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT OF AN IRS AGENT WE ARE NOW PROCEEDING WITH THE PROCESSING OF THE LARGE BACKLOG OF ROUTINE CASES WHICH BUILT UP DURING THE PRECEDING YEAR. UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY THESE CASES HAVE PRESENTED NO SPECIAL PROBLEMS. WE MAY IN FACT HAVE THE FIRST CASE WHICH COULD CREATE NEW POLITICAL ISSUES. THIS WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE MESSAGE. IN ANY EVENT, INTERIM PROCEDURES THUS FAR APPEAR ADEQUATE FOR ROUTINE INVESTIGATIONS AND NEITHER IRS NOR GCOB HAS OFFERED ANY COMPLAINTS. IT HAS NOT, HOWEVER, HAD SUFFICIENT TIME TO GENERATE A POSITIVE CONFIDENCE ON THE PART OF THE GCOB UPON WHICH WE COULD ADVANCE THE MORE FAR-REACHING PROPOSAL FOR AN ENLARGED FULL-TIME STAFF. GIVEN THIS BACKGROUND, EMBASSY BELIEVES

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ACTION M-01

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P 082141Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8904

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 NASSAU 1904

FROM COM

THAT TIMING OF REQUEST TO ESTABLISH A REGIONAL IRS OFFICE
IN NASSAU, REGARDLESS OF ITS SUBSTANTIVE MERITS OR LACK

THEREOF, IS FAR FROM OPTIMAL. WE FEEL THAT IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO ALLOW MORE TIME TO LAPSE BEFORE BROACHING QUESTION OF ESTABLISHING A FULL-TIME IRS PRESENCE IN NASSAU AND SEEKING THEIR APPROVAL OF SUCH A PROPOSAL.

B. IN ADDITION, WE ASSUME THAT DEPARTMENT WILL, IN THE RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE, BE SUBMITTING A DRAFT TEXT FOR AN EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION TREATY WITH GCOB, CLEARED BY JUSTICE, TREASURY AND OTHER INTERESTED AGENCIES. GIVEN GCOB'S PROVEN INABILITY TO ACT ON MORE THAN ONE PROPOSAL AT A TIME AND THEIR PROPENSITY TO CONFUSE ISSUES, WE BELIEVE THAT SUBMITTING IRS PROPOSAL FOR A REGIONAL OFFICE NOW MIGHT CLOUD OR OTHERWISE ADVERSELY PREJUDICE CHANCES OF ARRIVING AT A SUCCESSFUL AGREEMENT ON INFORMATIONAL EXCHANGES -- AN EVENTUALITY THE SUCCESS OF WHICH IS FAR FROM ASSURED.

C. ADDITIONALLY, WE DOUBT WHETHER BAHAMIAN PREELECTION PERIOD IS MOST PROPITIOUS TIME TO ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS WITH BAHAMIANS ON THIS SUBJECT. RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY "IRS" IS NOT THE MOST RESPECTED OR TRUSTED ACRONYM IN THE BAHAMAS AT THE MOMENT AND BAHAMIANS OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS ARE UNANIMOUS IN CONDEMNING WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO HAVE BEEN ITS LEGAL, QUASI-LEGAL OR EXTRA LEGAL ACTIVITIES HERE IN THE PAST, ITS FAILURE TO OBSERVE BAHAMIAN SOVEREIGNTY, AND ITS THREAT TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE POCKET BOOKS. LIKE THE "SPINY LOBSTER," IRS ACTIVITIES IN THE BAHAMAS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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OR QUICKLY CAN BECOME A POLITICAL RALLYING POINT WHICH NO LOCAL POLITICIAN POSSESSING ANY DEGREE OF POLITICAL ACUMEN CAN IGNORE. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT DEFERRING MATTER COULD SUBSTANTIALLY ENHANCE ITS PROBABILITY OF SUBSEQUENT ACCEPTANCE BY GCOB.

4. EMBASSY ALSO HAS QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS INCLUDING THE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE IN NASSAU AS OPPOSED TO MIAMI:

A. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND THAT IRS' OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS MIGHT OPPOSE SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT ON PURELY INTERNAL JURISDICTIONAL GROUNDS, WE WOULD HOPE THAT THIS ISSUE COULD BE FAVORABLY RESOLVED WITHIN THE SERVICE IN VIEW OF WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE EXCESSIVE COSTS OF MAINTAINING A NASSAU OFFICE.

B. EMBASSY ALSO NOTES THAT IRS FORESEES 55 PERCENT OF WORK TO BE PERFORMED IN NASSAU AND 45 PERCENT IN REMAINDER OF CARIBBEAN. GIVEN LIMITED NUMBER OF DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM NASSAU TO OTHER CARIBBEAN CAPITALS (CONNECTIONS ARE USUALLY ONLY OBTAINABLE IN MIAMI) AGENTS WOULD IN ALMOST EVERY CASE

HAVE TO TRANSIT MIAMI. THIS IS A FACTOR WHICH SHOULD BE WEIGHED IN COMPILING COSTS AS WELL AS OVERALL EFFICIENCY UNDER TWO OPTIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, EMBASSY ESTIMATES THAT AT LEAST ONE THIRD OF PROPOSED UNIT'S WORK WOULD BE IN FREEPORT, GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND. ROUND TRIP AIR FARE FROM BOTH MIAMI-FREEPORT-MIAMI AND NASSAU-FREEPORT-NASSAU IS DOLS 60.00 PER PERSON WHICH MAKES A NASSAU LOCATION FOR UNIT NO MORE ECONOMICAL THAN MIAMI. IN ADDITION, WHEN GRAND BAHAMA INVESTIGATIONS ARE SUBTRACTED FROM THE BAHAMAS AS A WHOLE THE WORK LOAD PERCENTAGE OF 45 PERCENT WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY REDUCED.

C. THE MOST CRITICAL AND IMMEDIATE PROBLEM REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT IRS OFFICE IN NASSAU WOULD BE TO ACCOMMODATE IT WITHIN EXISTING OFFICE SPACE LIMITATIONS. WE DEFINITELY DO NOT HAVE AVAILABLE OFFICE SPACE FOR TWO PERMANENT PROFESSIONALS, AN OCCASIONAL AUDITOR, AND A LOCALLY HIRED AMERICAN SECRETARY. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT ADDITIONAL SPACE MIGHT BE ACQUIRED BY LEASE IN THE LEASED
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CHANCERY. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IT WOULD NOT BE CONTINUOUS NOR WOULD WE BE ABLE TO INSURE ADEQUATE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.

5. IN ADDITION, MODE REVIEW SHOULD CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING EXPENSES WHICH WOULD BE ENCOUNTERED IN NASSAU AND WHICH SHOULD BE ASSESSED AGAINST MIAMI OPTION:

A. PRIVATE LEASED HOUSING - A MODEST TWO-BEDROOM HOME OR APARTMENT IN A RELATIVELY CRIME FREE AREA WOULD COST AT A MINIMUM BETWEEN DOLS 750 TO DOLS 850 PER MONTH, UTILITIES NOT INCLUDED.

B. COST OF UTILITIES - ELECTRICITY IS AN EXPENSIVE COMMODITY IN NASSAU, I.E. DURING THE SUMMER SEASON (ROUGHLY APRIL - NOVEMBER) A TWO-BEDROOM HOUSE WITH AIRCONDITIONING WOULD COST APPROXIMATELY DOLS 700 TO DOLS 800 PER QUARTER. WATER IS ALSO SOMEWHAT HIGHER THAN IN SOUTH FLORIDA.

C. COST-OF-LIVING - BECAUSE OF THE HIGH COST-OF-LIVING IN NASSAU, ALL AMERICAN EMPLOYEES ARE PAID A "POST LIVING ALLOWANCE" WHICH ON AN AVERAGE, WOULD BE APPROXIMATELY 15 TO 20 PERCENT OF AN EMPLOYEE'S SALARY. THE COSTS OF FOOD-STUFFS IN NASSAU ARE APPROXIMATELY 40 TO 60 PERCENT HIGHER THAN IN MIAMI.

D. SCHOOLING FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN - AS PUBLIC SCHOOLING IS USUALLY CONSIDERED INADEQUATE, DEPENDENT CHILDREN WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND A NASSAU PRIVATE SCHOOL WITH COSTS

RANGING FROM DOLS 1,550.00 PER YEAR FOR A LOWER GRADE STUDENT TO DOLS 2,000.00 PER YEAR FOR A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT.

E. SECRETARIAL COSTS - THE SALARY FOR AN EXPERIENCED LOCALLY HIRED AMERICAN CLERK-TYPIST WOULD BE APPROXIMATELY DOLS 8,000 OR DOLS 9,000 PER ANNUM.

F. OFFICE FURNITURE, FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT - THE EMBASSY DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT OFFICE FURNITURE, FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT TO OUTFIT THREE OFFICES. MOST OF THESE ITEMS WOULD HAVE TO BE PURCHASED BY IRS.

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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8905

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 NASSAU 1904

FROM COM

G. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT - AT THE MOMENT, IT IS NOT KNOWN TO WHAT EXTENT ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT WOULD BE REQUIRED, BUT IN ANY CASE IT WOULD HAVE TO BE ON A REIMBURSABLE BASIS. THIS WOULD INCLUDE:

(1) TRANSPORTATION - WITH ONLY ONE EMBASSY VEHICLE IN THE FLEET DESIGNATED FOR GENERAL USE, IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION WHICH WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE REQUESTED ON A FREQUENT BASIS. IRS WILL HAVE TO PROVIDE THEIR OWN TRANSPORTATION BY EITHER BRINGING IN AN OFFICIAL VEHICLE, RENTING ONE LOCALLY OR PAYING MILEAGE FOR PERSONALLY OWNED VEHICLES. RENTAL OF A VEHICLE LOCALLY SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED AS THE PRESENT GOING RATE FOR A VOLKSWAGEN IS DOLS 130 PER WEEK OR DOLS 6,240 PER ANNUM.

(2) COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS - CABLE TRAFFIC WILL MOST LIKELY INCREASE GIVEN THE NASSAU OFFICE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL OF THE CARIBBEAN AREA. WHILE THIS INCREASE WILL EVENTUALLY

BE FEASIBLE WHEN WE INSTALL OUR NEW C&R SYSTEM (SUMMER OF 1977) AND HAVE TWO FULL TIME COMMUNICATORS IN THE C&R OFFICE, IT WOULD PRESENT A SERIOUS AND ALMOST UNACCEPTABLE BURDEN AT THIS TIME.

(3) BUDGET AND FISCAL AND PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES - IMPACT ON OUR ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION CANNOT BE DETERMINED UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT IRS PERSONNEL WOULD REQUIRE.

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YM ESTABLISHMENT OF AN IRS OFFICE OF SIZE CONTEMPLATED WOULD GREATLY EXPAND OFFICIAL AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THIS SMALL COUNTRY (WE ALREADY HAVE 25 U.S. CUSTOMS, INS AND AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS WORKING AT THE NASSAU PRECLEARANCE UNIT WHICH COULD WELL BE DOUBLED IF A SIMILAR UNIT IS ESTABLISHED IN FREEPORT). IN FOREGOING CONNECTION, WE WOULD NOTE THAT EMBASSY HAS OPERATED UNDER ESTABLISHED DEPARTMENTAL GUIDELINES IN KEEPING U.S. OVERSEAS PRESENCE TO AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM. WE AGREE THAT THIS IS A DESIRABLE OBJECTIVE CONSISTENT WITH KEEPING A LOW U.S. POLITICAL PROFILE OVERSEAS. BUT WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE A CUT OF ONE POSITION FROM THE EMBASSY STAFF IMPOSED UNDER REPROGRAMMING WORKING GROUP (RWG) WITH THE INCREASE WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IRS OFFICE. AND WE WOULD FURTHER POINT OUT THAT AN EARLIER AND STILL PENDING DEA REQUEST FOR A PERMANENT STAFF WOULD ALSO REQUIRE RENEWED CONSIDERATION.

7. EMBASSY WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUBSCRIBES TO VIEW THAT IMPROVED EFFORTS ARE REQUIRED FOR CARRYING OUT IRS OBLIGATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN CARIBBEAN AND WOULD WELCOME THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THIS AREA. FOR REASONS STATED ABOVE, HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT (1) NOW IS THE TIME TO APPROACH GCOB WITH PROPOSAL THAT SUCH AN OFFICE BE ESTABLISHED IN THE BAHAMAS, OR (2) THAT NASSAU LOCATION WOULD BE WISEST ECONOMICALLY. ESTABLISHMENT OF O.I.O. OFFICE IN MIAMI SHOULD, IN OUR OPINION, BE CAREFULLY STUDIED SINCE ON THE SURFACE IT WOULD APPEAR TO OFFER NEEDED AND WORKABLE COVERAGE FOR NASSAU AND REST OF BAHAMAS AS WELL AS FOR OTHER PORTIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN AT CONSIDERABLY REDUCED COST. IN ADDITION, WE WOULD NOT RUN THE VARIOUS RISK PREVIOUSLY NOTED OF PUSHING THE GCOB AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE "ONCE AGAIN GETTING OUR FOOT IN THE DOOR."
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